



The

Chinese New Year

Period

By Julie O'Keeffe

Little New Year

Little New Year begins with the departure of the Kitchen God, ten days before the New Year. It ends when he returns on New Year's Eve. It is a period of time when people get ready for New Year's Eve celebrations. It is a time of festivities, lion dances and dragon dances, and it is what we participate in when we say we are going to Chinatown to celebrate the Chinese New Year.

Little New Year is one of the three debt-settling periods in the Chinese Year. People must pay their debts so that they start the New Year clear of debt.

Traditionally, if a man could not find the money to pay his debts he could be chased through the streets by his creditor. If caught, he could be robbed or beaten. His only refuge was in a temple, where he could hide

in safety until Little New Year was over.

Only then could he safely come out of hiding and he would not have to pay his debts until the next debt-

settling period during the 5th moon. Because Little New Year is a debt-settling period, shops have sales so that owners can obtain cash to pay their bills. It is therefore a good time to visit Hong Kong.

During Little New Year all preparations are made for the New Year period. Food is bought and prepared, people purchase new effigies of the gods, new posters, talismans, incense sticks, and lucky money envelopes. The house is spring cleaned, hair is shampooed, gifts are purchased.

Lion dances are performed in the streets, in restaurants and shops.

The Lion Dance is performed by two men. Rothe lion dances, he is teased and prodded by a funny little fellow wearing a mask and carrying a pole, on top of which is a ball symbolising the sun. Fire crackers are let off and the lion dances to the deafening din of the beating of drums.

As the lion dances its way through restaurants, the evil spirits are frightened away. The deafening noise of the crackers and the drums scare them, but the demons are petrified of the lion itself. In actual fact they are allergic to them. No evil spirit will be lurking around after the lion has appeared?

The Lion Dance

Lion dances, named *Shua-Shih-Tze* or 'exercising the lion' were originally performed for exorcising demons, as the animal is considered to be the Protector of Religion.

Nowadays the Lion Dance has no special significance and is performed on any occasion.

The Chinese Lion

The lion is one of the four fabulous creatures of good omen (the others are the phoenix, the unicorn and the tortoise). The lion is the protector of temples. Their carved images are placed at entrances to temples and important buildings.

It is considered an omen of good luck to rub your hand on the lion's paw as you pass, and for this reason many of the statues have smooth paws, worn down over the years by people's hands.

What the Lion looks like

The lion was never indigenous to China, so early Chinese artists painted and carved the animal without having any idea what a real lion looked like.

They had to use their imagination, and used the Tibetan dog (known as the lion dog) as a model. The lion is nearly always depicted squatting down. It has a trified tail instead of



a tufted one, its mane is curly, its forehead is domed, and its eyes are large and bulging.

Chinese New Year's Eve

According to the Chinese calendar, New Year's Eve falls between 21 January and 19 February, on the night of the 30th day of the 12th moon.

New Year's Day is celebrated indoors and is sacred as a family reunion.

Outsiders are not invited. New Year celebrations continue for the first five days of the new year, and each day is dedicated to a particular animal.

What happens on New Year's Eve?

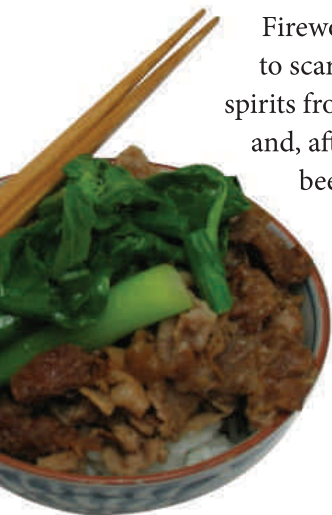
On this evening, family members congregate for a family reunion and feast. People stay awake to see the New Year in.

At midnight the Kitchen God returns to the household, and a new effigy is placed in the kitchen. Two candles are lit at his shrine and he is given two bows, prayers, and his ration of incense.

Children pay their respect to their parents by bowing before them. They are given Lucky Money envelopes containing luck money to guarantee another year of life.

After dinner the courtyard is strewn with branches of sesame, fir and cypress. This is first trampled on, then set on fire to ensure that no evil spirit is lurking to enter with the New Year, and to mark the passing of the old year.

Fireworks are set off to scare away evil spirits from the house and, after they have been frightened off, the doors and windows of the house are locked and sealed to make sure they don't return.



Dawn on New Year's Day

At dawn the doors are unlocked and the seals are removed by the male heir, who utters words of good omen and asks for prosperity in the coming year. This ceremony is called 'Opening the Gate of Good Fortune'.

Sticks of incense are ignited on containers high on the wall facing the entrance. The incense is burned to ensure wealth and time to enjoy it. The head of the household burns branches of sesame and pine (symbols of longevity), paper effigies of the household gods and an inscription of thanks written on a strip of red paper, and then he lets off fire crackers. These are burned to worship Heaven and Earth. New effigies of the family gods are put up in the house.

Male members of the household take three deep bows before the family gods and ancestral tablets. Red paper strips with written inscriptions asking for such things as good luck, good fortune, good health, and happiness in the coming year, are hung up in the house.

New Year's Day is a fasting day and no meat is eaten. The family celebrates the New Year indoors.

New Year customs

Traditionally shops close for the first three days of the New Year.

No cutting implement (for example, knives or scissors) can be used, as this will cut good luck in half. One must not wash one's hair as this washes away good luck. One must not sweep the house because this will sweep away good luck.

Gifts are exchanged between all friends and relatives. Presents for relations usually consist of clothing, but friends are generally given food. Politeness demands that when one is given a gift of food one should give a portion of it back as an indication that the gift is too generous. It is impolite to accept all of the food.

For the first five days of the New Year, women are not supposed to go out. Only male members of the household can take part in ceremonies to honour ancestors and the household gods.

New Year is everybody's birthday

New Year is everybody's birthday, as it is from that date that age is reckoned, regardless of the actual date of one's birth. Once New Year has dawned everyone becomes a year older. On the universal day of mankind (the 7th day of the New Year) people should stay at home. Chinese conventions are the exact opposite to our own. In Western society, birthdays are a highlight of a child's life — a special day, presents, parties — while adults tend to dislike being reminded of their age. In Chinese society, old age is revered. Children are ignored on their birthday while adults are congratulated on having passed another milestone on the road to longevity.

The first anniversary of a child's birth is celebrated when the child has survived a month. Before that date the child is not considered as a member of society. When a child is one month old it is brought to the temple. Presents consist of food, but articles are placed before the child to determine the path of life in which he is most likely to succeed: pens and paper to indicate a scholar, an abacus to indicate a business career, and so on.

Afterwards no notice is taken of a birthday until a youth or maiden comes of age and marriage is contemplated. Then the parents-in-law give presents of food and clothing, but the youth's own parents tend not to. Generally speaking, it is not considered appropriate for those closely related to give presents, and there is no family party.

If you were a child in China you would honour your parents on their birthdays. Children bow before their parents on their parents' birthday and wish them long life. If the children are grown up, the younger child gives the parent a party. Chicken and long-life noodles would be on the menu.

The most important birthdays in a man's life are 21, 31, 41, ..., when he enters a new decade.

Popular household deities

There are several deities which are very close to the common life of Chinese people. You can generally find them in the home.

1. Tsao Wang, the Kitchen God.
2. The Door God
3. Kuang-ti (a deified ancient General) who, together with Ch'in-Shu-Pao and Yu Ch'ih Ching-Te, guard the entrance to ward off evil spirits.
4. The three most popular star gods Shou Hsing, the God of Longevity, Lu Hsing, the God of Luck and Good Fortune, and Fu Hsing, the God of Wealth. These three star gods always appear together, either as ornaments on a shelf or in posters and talismans. Tsao Wang and the Door God are generally depicted on a red scroll, on which their names are written in Chinese characters. The other gods are depicted as people.

Tsao Wang, the Kitchen God

Tsao Wang is one of the oldest and most important of the household deities. His effigy, which can be a highly coloured picture, or a red panel on which is written the characters for his name, may be pasted on a wall over the stove or may occupy a small wooden or bamboo shrine somewhere in the kitchen.

Tsao Wang travels on a horse, so he is often drawn with his horse beside him.

Tsao Wang's role in the household:

1. Tsao Wang looks after the stove and takes note of the moral behaviour of family members throughout the year.
2. Seven days before New Year he is ceremoniously sent up to heaven where he lays the family's moral record before the All Highest, the Jade Emperor. He tells on the family.
3. His departure from the household marks the beginning of Little New Year. He returns from his celestial visit on New Year's Eve.



The Door God

Tsao Wang

The Kitchen God

灶
君



KUAN-TI

Kuan-Ti is one of the gods of wealth. He is the god of commerce, good luck and good fortune. He doesn't bring wealth, he guards against evil spirits entering the house or business and thus ensures success and wealth.

According to ancient mythology, he was a General during the Three Kingdoms period (221-263).

He is the god who represents war.

In pictures, he is portrayed as having a red face. He is usually attended by a black-faced man with a halberd on his left and a pink-faced youth with a money bag on his right.

Kuan Ti's birthday is celebrated on the second day of the Chinese New Year. On the morning of the second day, the old paper god is taken down and burned in the courtyard or street. Then a fresh effigy is installed with incense and firecrackers:

- incense to worship the god properly, and
- firecrackers to frighten away evil spirits.

A sacrifice of food or rice cakes is also offered according to the means of the family. When the offering is placed on the table before the picture, a cup of fiery wine is ignited and the head of the family makes the three-fold kowtow. Sacrifices (offerings) have to be carried out in order to maintain the goodwill of the ancestral spirits.

Religious rites have to be performed by the head of the family, a male — so male heirs were essential. It was necessary for the family to produce heirs to carry on these rites in the correct manner, and so maintain the family's status. Several sons were needed, to ensure that at least one survived into his parents' old age. Female children were of secondary importance.

(This practice seems to have originated during the Shan period, 1800-200BC.)

Tsao Wang's departure from the household

1. Tsao Wang departs on the night of the 23rd day of the 12th moon — seven days before the New Year.
2. On the night of his departure, his effigy is burned and the smoke takes him up to heaven. Incense is burned to make his departure happy, and some straw is burned by the stove as forage for his horse. A bowl of water is placed by the stove so that it will not go thirsty.
3. It is in the family's interest to ensure that Tsao Wang makes a good report before the Jade Emperor, and various measures are taken to ensure that this will happen.
A special sweetmeat (Tang Kua) is burned, along with the effigy, to ensure that he will only have sweet things to say. Alternatively, the family may make certain of his silence by smearing his mouth with opium or steeping him in wine. This is to make him drowsy or fuddled when he reaches the
- end of his journey so that he risks expulsion before he can get a word in with the Jade Emperor.
4. Firecrackers are ignited to speed him on his way.
5. It is interesting to note that women of the house-hold are debarred from his worship.

Lucky Money Envelopes

Front



喜

Happiness

禄

Wealth

寿

Longevity

福

Luck

The double *Hsi* is for married happiness

Back



Lucky Money Envelopes

The Lucky Money Envelope wishes the recipient happiness, longevity and affluence (wealth).

Longevity is important because an old person is someone on his way to becoming an ancestor.

Elders are therefore honoured and respected.

Zodiac Animals

RAT



Honest ambitious & clever

1900, 1912, 1924, 1936, 1948,
1960, 1972, 1984, 1996, 2008

You get along with Dragon and
Monkey, but not with Horse.

OX



Bright, patient & hard-working

1901, 1913, 1925, 1937, 1949,
1961, 1973, 1985, 1997, 2009

You get along with Snake and
Rooster, but not with Sheep.

TIGER



Courageous, powerful & adventurous

1902, 1914, 1926, 1938, 1950,
1962, 1974, 1986, 1998, 2010

You get along with Horse and Dog,
but not with Monkey.

HARE



Caring, talented & graceful

1903, 1915, 1927, 1939, 1951,
1963, 1975, 1987, 1999, 2011

You get along with Sheep and Boar,
but not with Rooster.

DRAGON



Energetic, healthy & powerful

1904, 1916, 1928, 1940, 1952,
1964, 1976, 1988, 2000, 2012

You get along with Monkey and Rat,
but not with Dog.

SNAKE



Wise, calm & elegant

1905, 1917, 1929, 1941, 1953,
1965, 1977, 1989, 2001, 2013

You get along with Rooster and Ox,
but not with Boar.

HORSE



Attractive, independent & stylish

1906, 1918, 1930, 1942, 1954,
1966, 1978, 1990, 2002, 2014

You get along with Tiger and Dog,
but not with Rat.

SHEEP



Gentle, artistic & creative

1907, 1919, 1931, 1943, 1955,
1967, 1979, 1991, 2003, 2015

You get along with Boar and Hare
but not with Ox.

MONKEY



Intelligent, organised, enthusiastic

1908, 1920, 1932, 1944, 1956,
1968, 1980, 1992, 2004, 2016

You get along with Dragon and Rat,
but not with Tiger.

ROOSTER



Careful, independent, hard-working

1909, 1921, 1933, 1945, 1957,
1969, 1981, 1993, 2005, 2017

You get along with Snake and Ox,
but not with Hare.

DOG



Honest, loyal & generous

1910, 1922, 1934, 1946, 1958,
1970, 1982, 1994, 2006, 2018

You get along with Horse and Tiger,
but not with Dragon.

BOAR



Generous, helpful & noble

1911, 1923, 1935, 1947, 1959,
1971, 1983, 1995, 2007, 2019

You get along with Hare and Sheep,
but not with other Boars.

According to the Chinese lunar calendar, the New Year begins on the second new moon after the first day of winter.

This day usually falls in late January or February.

Each year is named after a different animal. Children born during that year are believed to have the characteristics of that animal.

Twelve years form one zodiac cycle.

The Chinese Dragon

The Dragon Procession

The dragon is ten metres or more long, built of bamboo rods and cloth, with blue and gold eyes, silver horns and red tassels. It has a long green beard and a big mouth with a red tongue.

The whole animal is carried about by a group of men, each of whom holds a stick which supports one of the dragon's limbs. The body is illuminated by many candles fixed on the body.

The animal follows an 'ornamental sunball' — a big textile ball symbolising the sun — which is hunted by the rain-bearing dragon, the symbol of the clouds.

Onlookers open fire on the dragon with bamboo tubes filled with powder and iron chips.

The dragon procession is a feature of the Chinese New Year celebrations.



This dragon was the emblem of Imperial power. As a decorative motif, the Imperial dragon had five claws. Decorative dragons with only four claws were used by the common people.

The dragon's scales number 81 — which is 9×9 , the paramount lucky number.

Its voice resembles the beating of a gong. On each side of its mouth are whiskers, and under its chin is a bright pearl.

When its breath escapes it forms clouds, sometimes changing into rain and at other times into fire.

About the Chinese Dragon

1. He is a composite creature made up of different animals.
2. In ancient Chinese times the dragon was believed to rule over water, rain and drought.
3. The dragon also causes thunder and lightning in a storm that begins in spring and ends in summer.
4. He lives in the sky in spring and summer and in the water in autumn and winter.
5. This mythical creature suffers from deafness.
6. It breathes a sort of vapour which may turn into rain or become incandescent (be raised to such a high temperature as to produce artificial light.)
7. Its voice is the sound of copper pans clashing like cymbals.
8. The dragon can make himself visible or invisible, thick or thin, long or short.

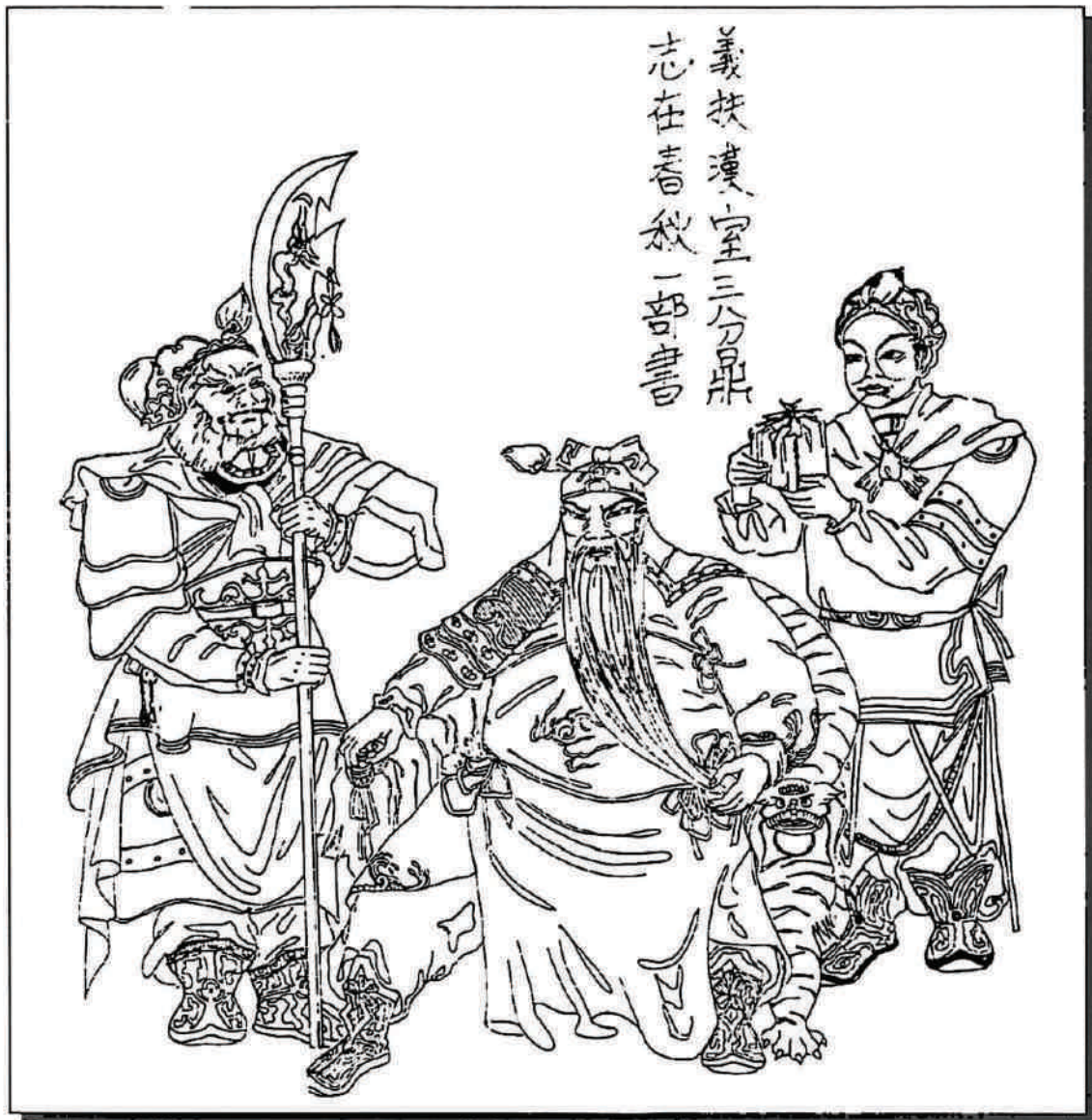
The Imperial Dragon

The Imperial Dragon was distinguished by having five claws and the privilege of wearing it was limited to the Emperor, his sons and princes of the first rank. Those of the third and fourth ranks wore a four-clawed emblem, while those of the fifth and sixth rank, and certain officials, were entitled only to a five-clawed serpent.

The Chinese Gate Gods

The Gate Gods are the two tutelary deities of the household

1. The two Generals who stand on either side of *Kuari-Ti* deal with any evil spirits who attempt to intrude.
2. They guard the means of entry and prevent evil spirits entering the house.
3. They are *Ch'in-Shu-Pao* (the white-faced one) and *Yu Ch'ih Ching-Te* (with a black face) who is his companion in arms. Evil spirits are allergic to and frightened of black faces.
4. Both wear full armour. They hold a gemmed halberd (a combined spear and battleaxe) and they have a whip, chain, bow and arrows at their belt.
5. During the last week of the twelfth moon, the brightly coloured warriors are pasted on the double panels of the front door or inside facing the entrance.



This particular poster is pasted on the wall in every Chinese business. Often the outsider has to search for it, but it's generally found facing the main entrance. Sometimes this poster is also put in the house (but not always).

A Chinese Talisman

The three star gods on a Chinese Talisman

This talisman bestows wishes for longevity, wealth and good luck on its owner. Chinese buy this poster and put it at the front door and on the rice bin just before New Year.

The three star gods
in the middle are,
from left to right:
Shou Hsing, God of
Longevity; *Lu Hsing*,
God of Luck; and
Fu Hsing, God of
Wealth



Zodiac Animals

○ 'Characteristics of the animal' means

.....

.....

✎ LIST the characteristics of:

Dragon

Monkey

Boar

Hare

Snake

✎ What zodiac sign would have the following characteristics?

gentle & creative

graceful & talented

ambitious & honest

loyal & generous

calm & wise

energetic & healthy

patient & hard-working

independent & careful

○ DISCUSS the meanings of the words that describe the qualities of each animal.

○ COMPARE the Chinese and Vietnamese zodiac animal signs.

LIST similarities and differences:

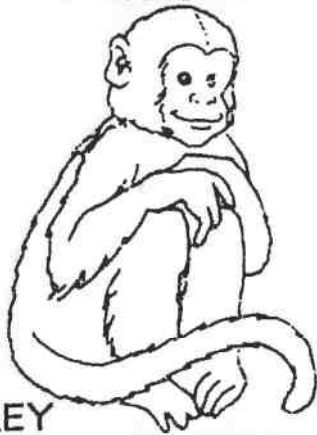
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✎ WRITE the zodiac sign you were born under. LIST the characteristics of your sign.

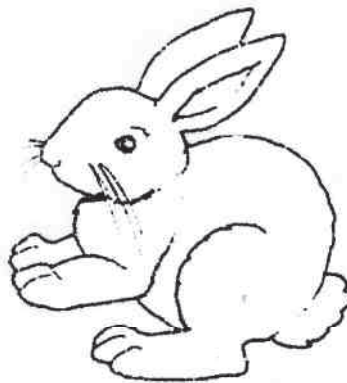
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Chinese New Year zodiac animals

- Reproduce the zodiac animals on card.
- Carefully cut out the 12 animals of the Chinese lunar calendar.
- Sequence the animals in correct calendar order.
- Match ordinals (both word and number) to each animal.



MONKEY



HARE



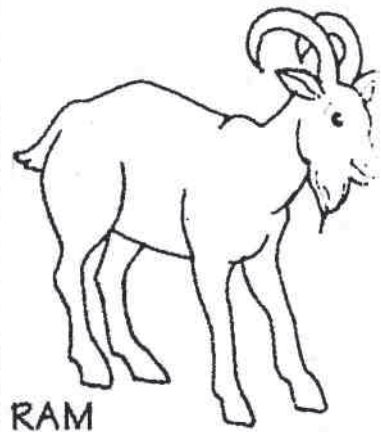
ROOSTER



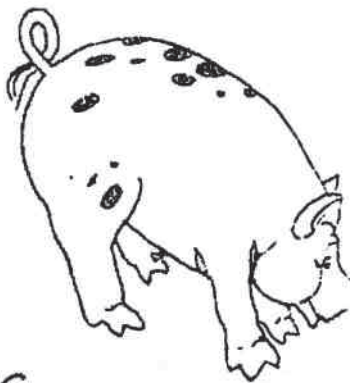
TIGER



RAT



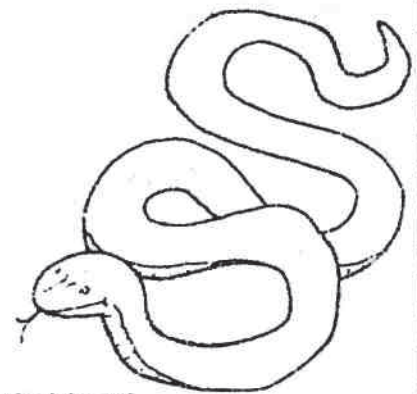
RAM



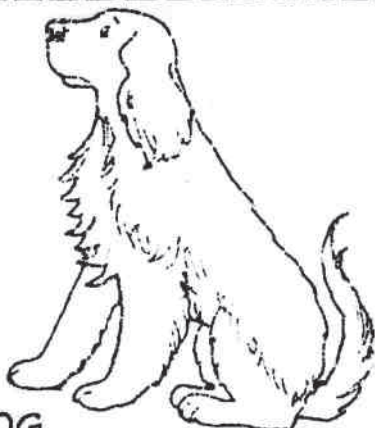
PIG



HORSE



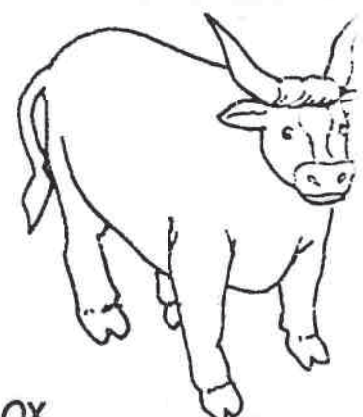
SNAKE



DOG



DRAGON



OX

Chinese New Year

Each lunar year is named after one of 12 animals.













The twelve animals in the Chinese zodiac are rat, ox, tiger, rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, sheep, monkey, rooster, dog, and boar.

There are 12 years to a cycle. Each cycle begins with the Year of the Rat.

Read the wheel in an anticlockwise direction to work out the order of the animals in the Chinese lunar calendar.



It is the Chinese custom to name each year after an animal. It is said that the animal ruling the year you were born will influence your life. Each animal is thought to have its own personality and emotions - which might characterise those born within its year.

 <p>鼠</p> <p>Year of the Rat</p> <p>1948, 1960, 1972, 1984, 1996, 2008</p> <p>Rat people are very popular. They like to invent things and are good artists.</p>	 <p>牛</p> <p>Year of the Ox</p> <p>1949, 1961, 1973, 1985, 1997, 2009</p> <p>People born in this year are dependable and calm. They are good listeners and have very strong ideas.</p>	 <p>虎</p> <p>Year of the Tiger</p> <p>1950, 1962, 1974, 1986, 1998, 2010</p> <p>Tiger people are brave. Other people respect tiger people for their deep thoughts and courageous actions.</p>	 <p>兔</p> <p>Year of the Rabbit</p> <p>1951, 1963, 1975, 1987, 1999, 2011</p> <p>People born in this year are nice to be around. They like to talk, and many people trust them.</p>
 <p>龍</p> <p>Year of the Dragon</p> <p>1952, 1964, 1976, 1988, 2000, 2012</p> <p>Dragon people have good health and lots of energy. They are good friends because they listen carefully to others.</p>	 <p>蛇</p> <p>Year of the Snake</p> <p>1941, 1953, 1965, 1977, 1989, 2001</p> <p>People born in this year love good books, food, music, and plays. They will have good luck with money.</p>	 <p>馬</p> <p>Year of the Horse</p> <p>1942, 1954, 1966, 1978, 1990, 2002</p> <p>People born in this year are popular, cheerful, and are quick to compliment others. Horse people can work very hard.</p>	 <p>羊</p> <p>Year of the Sheep</p> <p>1943, 1955, 1967, 1979, 1991, 2003</p> <p>People born in this year are very good artists. They ask many questions, like nice things, and are very wise.</p>
 <p>猴</p> <p>Year of the Monkey</p> <p>1944, 1956, 1968, 1980, 1992, 2004</p> <p>Monkey people are very funny. They can always make people laugh. They are also very good at solving problems.</p>	 <p>雞</p> <p>Year of the Rooster</p> <p>1945, 1957, 1969, 1981, 1993, 2005</p> <p>People born in this year are hard workers. They have many talents and think deep thoughts.</p>	 <p>犬</p> <p>Year of the Dog</p> <p>1946, 1958, 1970, 1982, 1994, 2006</p> <p>Dog people are loyal and can always keep a secret. Sometimes dog people worry too much.</p>	 <p>猪</p> <p>Year of the Boar</p> <p>1947, 1959, 1971, 1983, 1995, 2007</p> <p>People born in this year are very good students. They are honest and brave. They always finish a project or assignment.</p>

Chinese Zodiac Animal Puppets

by Julie O'Keefe



Make your own Chinese Zodiac Animal Puppets

Carefully cut out each Animal.

Attach a straw Or stick to each animal to make a puppet.

After watching the video of the Chinese Zodiac Animal Race, with a partner, retell the story of the Great Race.

Read stories about how the Chinese Years got their animal names. Stories are available on the Internet.

- ❑ The Chinese name their years after certain animals.
- ❑ There are twelve (12) animals in the zodiac cycle which is also 12 years.
- ❑ Each animal has qualities that are positive and negative.
- ❑ The animal year in which a person is born influences their character and potential. The animals of the Chinese zodiac are, in order: Rat, Ox, Tiger, Rabbit, Dragon, Snake, Horse, Goat, Monkey, Rooster, Dog, Boar.
- ❑ The date of the Chinese New Year is determined by a lunar calendar. The new year begins on the second new moon after the first day of Winter (Northern Hemisphere). This day usually falls in late January or February, so the date of Chinese New Year varies.
- ❑ **Recommended:** *Why Rat Comes First. A story of the Chinese zodiac, retold by Clara Yen. ISBN 0 89239 0072 7*
- ❑ Provide opportunities for students to identify the animal named for their year of birth. Read about its qualities and characteristics.
- ❑ Students draw their own version of their Chinese zodiac animal symbol.
- ❑ Australia Post puts out a series of stamps for Chinese New Year each year. This is a great resource for students to view and discuss the artist's representation of the relevant animal.
- ❑ Fantastic 2D and 3D door and wall decorations of the animal for the year are available from Chinatowns. They range from traditional designs to very cute modern interpretations of the animal. My students love them; and they make for a very bright, welcoming doorway to your classroom for the year.



Making Animal Puppets

For this activity my Stage 3 students developed a play script for a story about how the animals of the Chinese zodiac got their names, based on the reading of several narratives and versions of this story.

Turning narratives into scripts for performance works really well and develops reading, writing, listening and talking skills through the process. Making and using puppets enriches the performance and engages the students in a rewarding, enjoyable experience, as well as targeting Drama and Visual Arts outcomes.

There is no set way for making puppets for the play. The following is an outline of the process undertaken by my students. The puppets were all individual and designed and constructed during class time by the students. A couple of the puppets needed to go home with their creators for upgrading and repairs!

MATERIALS (What you need)	METHOD (What to do)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lots of books and instructions for making puppets. • Text and discussion about what a puppet is and the purpose/s of using puppets. • A wide range of images of each of the animals of the zodiac, including realistic as well as cartoon style. • Things with which to make the puppets (cardboard boxes, cardboard, corrugated paper, paper plates, wool, string, buttons, newspaper, cellophane, paint, split pins, cotton wool, sticks from the bush, dowel, fabric, sequins, glitter, coloured paper, tissue and crepe paper, textas, and loads of masking tape) • Craft and wood glue • Glue gun • Stapler • Scissors 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students work in pairs and draw the name of an animal out of a hat (include Jade Emperor). 2. Discuss possibilities, referring to puppet books and images. 3. Decide on the type of puppet to be made. 4. Draw a labelled plan of the animal character, including materials to be used for different parts. 5. List materials and tools needed. Decide who will be responsible for gathering these items. 6. Follow the labelled plan of the puppet to <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) draw a basic outline of the puppet shape b) cut out shapes and parts c) assemble and decorate (interchangeable). 7. During the assembling stage, ensure that <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) parts of the body such as the legs and head can move b) everything is attached securely so bits and pieces don't fall off during the performance c) the puppet can be easily manipulated and/or worn by the puppeteers. 8. Consider: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Will the puppeteers manipulate the puppet by using sticks? If so, what is the number and length of sticks? b) Will the puppet be worn on the head of the puppeteer? c) Will the puppeteers be inside the puppet



Puppet Play – Chinese Zodiac

A story of how the Chinese zodiac years got their names, adapted by JULIE O'KEEFFE

THIS PLAY ALLOWS FOR TWENTY-EIGHT (28) STUDENTS TO BE ACTIVELY INVOLVED

Storytellers: ☐ Two (2)

Characters: ☐ Jade Emperor

☐ Each animal puppet is operated by 2 students

STORYTELLER: Once upon a time, a monkey, a dog and a dragon had a terrible argument. They were arguing about who the New Year should be named after.

DRAGON (*roaring*): This year should be called the Year of the Dragon because I'm the most energetic and powerful.

MONKEY (*shouting*): Oh no it shouldn't! It should be called after me because I have good ideas!

DOG (*barking*): What? Why should it be named after you? It should be named after me. I work the hardest and am loyal and honest.

DRAGON AND MONKEY: Oh no you don't! Oh no you're not!

DOG: Oh yes I am!!

STORYTELLER: And so they argued on for hours and hours and hours!! And, as they argued, other animals came along to listen. But, after a while, they also joined in the argument. Each animal wanted the year named after itself.

TIGER, HORSE, SNAKE, PIG, OX, ROOSTER, RABBIT, GOAT, RAT: Each animal gives a reason why it should be first. The students scripted this themselves, and based their reasons on their knowledge of the characteristics and qualities of each.

STORYTELLER: In the end, there were twelve animals arguing together, and soon a fight broke out. There was roaring and chattering, barking and growling, neighing and bellowing, squeaking and thumping, hissing and bleating, crowing and grunting. There was so much noise that it disturbed the Jade Emperor, who lived in the heavens.

JADE EMPEROR (*annoyed*): What on earth is the matter with those animals? I'll go and see what's happening!!

STORYTELLER: The Jade Emperor appeared in the sky. This gave the animals such a fright that they stopped their arguing and stared up at the Emperor.

JADE EMPEROR (*demanding*): Why are you making such a noise?
What are you quarrelling about?

STORYTELLER: All the animals started to answer at once.
The noise was deafening!

JADE EMPEROR (*ordering*): Stop it! Please tell me slowly, one at a time.

STORYTELLER: The animals bowed their heads. They were ashamed of their bad manners. One by one, the animals explained the problem.

MONKEY, DOG, TIGER, HORSE, SNAKE, PIG, OX, ROOSTER, RABBIT, GOAT, RAT: (*The students scripted this part themselves.*)

The Jade Emperor called each animal forward. The 'animals' scripted their own explanations and presented them to the Jade Emperor.

STORYTELLER: The Jade Emperor listened to each of the animals carefully, and came up with an idea to solve the problem.

JADE EMPEROR (*wisely*): I have an idea that will solve this problem. There will be a race across the river. The animal that gets across the river first will be the winner, and will have the honour of the New Year being named after it.

STORYTELLER: The animals liked the idea, and each one thought that he would win. They rushed to the river bank, and lined up ready for the start.

JADE EMPEROR (*shouting*): On your marks! Get set! Go!

STORYTELLER: And with a great splash, all twelve animals jumped into the river and began swimming as fast as they could towards the opposite bank. The river was quite deep, and there was a strong current.

OX (*bragging*): I'm the strongest swimmer out of all the animals. I'm going to win this race easily. No problem.

STORYTELLER: The Ox was soon in the lead in the race. But he hadn't noticed Rat, who was swimming behind him.





RAT: Oh dear, this water is too deep and strong for me! I'm smart and clever. I must think of a way of getting across the river before I drown! I know, I'll grab onto Ox's tail and hitch a ride on his strong back!

STORYTELLER: Rat swam as hard as he could, and managed to grab the end of Ox's tail. He climbed up it without Ox noticing and tiptoed along Ox's back, and settled down for the ride just behind Ox's ear.

OX (*looking over his shoulder, boastfully*): I'm way out in front of all the other animals. I'm definitely going to win this race!!! Only a few more strokes with my strong legs and I'm there!

STORYTELLER: Ox felt so sure he was going to win, he laughed out loud. But as he did this, he swallowed a big mouthful of water and began to cough and splutter. Rat took advantage of this opportunity and jumped over Ox's head onto the river bank.

RAT (*squeaking*): I'm the winner!!! I'm the winner!! I'm the winner!!

JADE EMPEROR: Bad luck Ox! You were the strongest, but Rat was too clever for you. This year will be the Year of the Rat and next year will be the Year of the Ox.

JADE EMPEROR: Congratulations to you all for finishing this challenging race. To reward your effort, I will name a Year after each of you according to the order you finished the race. Tiger, you will be the third year, Rabbit the fourth, Dragon the fifth, Snake the sixth, Horse the seventh, Goat the eighth, Monkey the ninth, Rooster the tenth, Dog the eleventh, and Pig the twelfth.

As each animal year is named, animals bow low before the Jade Emperor, and move away.

ANIMALS (*in appreciation*): Thank you Jade Emperor!!!

STORYTELLER: And that's how the Years got their names!!

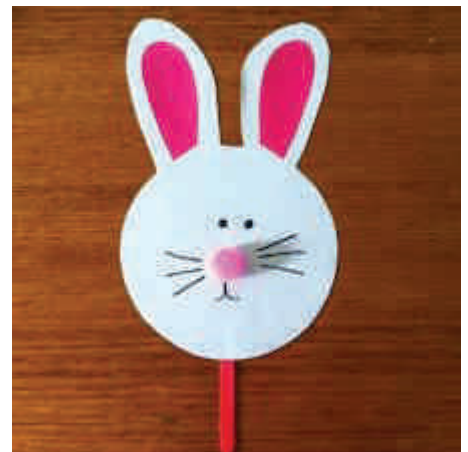
All animals come together, neighing, bellowing, bleating, etc., and bow.

THE END



Some tips from our experience of using the puppets and performing this play.

- Adding a soundscape of animal noises adds humour and impact.
- When manipulating the puppets, move like the animal - which takes practice!
- Hold the puppets on sticks high during the performance.
- O Have the narrator meander and weave through the characters and action on the stage - not standing off to the side.
- Ensure puppets are constructed in a way so that some parts of them can move (eg. arms, legs, head).
- Puppets can be worn (eg. on the head) and the rest of the student's body becomes part of the puppet.
- Students can be inside the puppet (eg. inside a box).
- O Make the puppets large! They look fantastic, and pack a punch on stage.
- Dress in all black for performing (eg. black pants, black T-shirts), with bare feet.
- Speak in the voice of the animal character.
- Glue the narrator's script to large red and gold pieces of cardboard.
- Relax and enjoy the process.



Rabbit (or Hare)



Dragon



Goat